

**Sepa signs MoU with AKU**

KARACHI: The Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Aga Khan University (AKU) with an aim to collaborate and build capacity on environmental issues.

Director general of Sepa Naeem Mughal and dean of AKU's medical college Dr Adil Haider signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisations.

Earlier, Dr Syed Zafar Ahmed Fatmi, a senior professor at the AKU department of community health sciences, gave a detailed orientation on the departmental working and objectives of the agreement.

The AKU department of community health sciences, he said, was the largest department of its kind in Pakistan and emphasised that this MoU would serve as a stepping stone for environmental protection.

The audience was informed that a quarter of deaths in the world were being caused by environmental degradation and that the largest number of deaths took place in Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific regions, followed by sub-Saharan Africa, where around a quarter of deaths were likely caused by air pollution, chemicals, climate change and lack of access to sanitation.

Air pollution was estimated to cause seven million premature deaths annually, the audience was told.

Later, director general of Sepa gave a comprehensive presentation on the impact of air pollution and the steps taken by the agency to address the problem.

He also talked about urban and air quality issues in Sindh and said that vehicular emissions were a major contributor of air pollution.

Mr Mughal also highlighted the department's efforts in tackling pollution issues related to brick kilns, coal power projects, cotton ginning, stone crushing units, municipal and solid waste and burning of batteries.

In his speech, Dr Adil Haider appreciated the agreement between the two institutions and said that the AKU followed a holistic approach meant to safeguard the communities and environment.

Taimur Talpur, the minister of environment, climate change and coastal development, noted that the government was determined to do its best to provide relief the masses despite facing a financial crunch.

"Today's agreement is a reflection of our commitment in this regard. We need friends like the AKU to have a better understanding of environmental issues," he said, adding that such initiatives would help improve policy making.

**The Newspaper's Staff Reporter**